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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: South Lebanon, Syria/Iran,
Syria/Russia, Palestinian Territories, Iraq (7/10-13)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers reported the deteriorating situation in south Lebanon in the wake of the Hizbollah capture of two Israeli soldiers. Headlines featured President Asad's consultations on the situation in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories with President Mubarak, UN SecGen Kofi Annan, Saudi Monarch Abdullah, Ali Larijani, Secretary of the Supreme Council of National Security in Iran, and King Hamad Bin Issa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain.

Papers also reported Vice President Shara's and FM Mouallem's meetings with Dr. Ali Larijani, Head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, who briefed Syrian officials on his consultations with Europeans on the Iranian nuclear dossier. Mr. Shara reiterated Syria's stance regarding the right of all countries to possess nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, adding that concern must focus on turning the Middle East into a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, especially the Israeli nuclear arsenal, and abandoning the double-standards policy in dealing with issues of the region. On developments in Iraq, the two sides pointed out the identity of their views regarding the importance of redoubling efforts to maintain Iraq's territorial integrity and unity, achieving security and stability and foiling all attempts to spread sedition among Iraqi parties. On the escalations in South Lebanon and Palestine, the Vice President asserted that "the final decision is up to the resistance in Palestine and South Lebanon, as they are the parties who certainly decide what to do and why."

On Syrian-Palestinian relations, papers reported the visit to Damascus by Abullah al-Hourani, Member of the Executive Committee of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, who hailed the significance of the role played by Syria in the Arab- Palestinian struggle. In a statement after meeting with Vice President Farouq al-Shara, Hourani said that the delegation briefed the Vice President on the situation inside the Palestinian territories and the suffering of the Palestinian people due to the nonstop Israeli offensive and the siege imposed on them. He noted that talks have dealt with "how to end the Palestinian people's suffering and how to handle the situation via the national accord document that was agreed upon by all the Palestinian forces."

On Syrian-Russian relations, papers reported the visit to Moscow of Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mikdad, which was within the framework of Russian mediation aiming to find a solution for the aggravated situation in the Palestinian territories as a result of the latest Israeli aggression and the kidnapping of the Israeli soldier.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"The Lebanese national resistance carries out a distinguished operation and captures two Israeli soldiers, killing 8 and injuring 29. SecGen of Hizbollah Nasrallah: We are ready for cool-down or confrontation.... Releasing prisoners is through swap operations. Lebanon calls for an extraordinary session of the UN Security Council. Israel expands its aggression" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/13)

"Secretary Rice calls on Syria to utilize its influence" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 7/13)

"President Asad discusses developments in the region in telephone conversations with UN Secretary General Annan and Egyptian President Mubarak, and exchanges messages with King of Bahrain" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/13)

"FM al-Mouallem conveys a message from President Asad to Saudi King Abdullah on the situation in Iraq and the Palestinian territories. President Asad reviews developments in the region and Syria's pivotal role in supporting security and stability in the region with Papandreou, leader of the PASOK party in Greece" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/12)

"Vice-President Shara discusses with Larijani, Head of Iran's

Supreme National Security Council, the latest developments in the region and the outcome of Iranian-European discussions. Shara: Occupation is the cause of escalation; the decision is up to the resistance in Lebanon and Palestine" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/13)

"VP Shara and FM al-Mouallem receive a Palestinian delegation: National unity in the face of Israeli offensive" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/13)

"Israel uses banned missiles against civilians in the Gaza Strip. Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan: Israel's excessive use of force complicates the crisis of the captured Israeli soldier" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/12)

"Deputy FM Miqdad discusses the catastrophic situation in the Palestinian territories with Russian FM Lavrov: Syria hopes for suitable international measures" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/12)

"Deputy Foreign Minister Miqdad holds discussions with Russian Deputy FM Sulatanov on enhancement of Syrian-Russian relations and coordination in the face of challenges" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/13)

"Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Habib discusses with the Russian military delegation means of promoting technical military cooperation between the Syrian and Russian armies" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 7/13)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"This Is the Equation"

Izz-al-Din al-Darwish, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented (7/10): "Israel is using the capture of the Israeli soldier to justify the preplanned Israeli killing plan and to hinder the work of the Palestinian government, which has

managed to overcome the obstacles of the siege and the shortage of funds....

"The release of the captured soldier is the last thing in the mind of Olmert's government.... The Olmert government wants to kill, destroy, tighten the siege on Palestinians, and prevent their democratically elected government from carrying out its missions. It seeks to impose the argument that it has no Palestinian negotiating partner and that it has no choice but to continue with its unilateral plans for the West Bank, the settlements, and Jerusalem....

"In order to realize this objective, Israel does not mind using all forms of terrorism against the Palestinians.... Whether it likes it or not, the US Administration is sponsoring Israeli terrorism, directly participating in the killing of Palestinian children, and preventing the application of international legitimacy. This is what history will record about President Bush and his secretaries, particularly Rumsfeld and Rice.

"Israel is committing war crimes in the occupied territories while the world is doing nothing because of US tyranny, which is devoted to support of Israeli aggression. The Palestinian people are determined not to give up their national rights, no matter what the ordeals. As for the captured Israeli soldier, he has no priority in the programs of the Olmert government. This is the equation now in the occupied territories."

"Hawkers of Frustration"

Abdul Fattah Awad, chief editor of government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (7/11): "Some have volunteered to make and spread statements of frustration. Instead of supporting the Palestinian people, which is the least we should be doing, some people have participated in an organized frustration process. They have even described the Palestinian people's suffering as the result of the actions of the resistance....

"The frustration process will not succeed in frustrating the Arab and Palestinian streets.... The Arab street has always proven that it is more aware and clever than the regimes of fear....

"The Arab street is aware of what is going on in Iraq and believes that the atrocities committed in Baghdad and Gaza are committed with the same weapon and with the aim of achieving a common goal... The Syrian people's support of the Palestinian people is in line with Syrian policy, which chose to adopt the people's position...

"It is very clear that the Israeli escalation against Palestinians, and the 'Summer Rains,' cannot be discussed in isolation from the failure that has characterized the US-Israeli project in all the countries surrounding us.... The US and Israel have failed in their attempt to save this project.... The Palestinian people's steadfastness will now guarantee that the US and Israel will fail...."

"Acknowledgement of Failure Is Insufficient"

Ali Qasim, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (7/11): "Israeli war minister Amir Peretz's acknowledgement of failure of the military operations against the Gaza Strip was not surprising. It was inevitable, because Palestinians have proven that they are capable of remaining steadfast during long years of occupation, have managed to find alternatives to confront all forms of Israeli aggression, and have shown that they are fully aware of the objectives of this aggression....

"The Israeli acknowledgement of failure might open the door for other steps that need to be taken to put things back in order,

namely, the need to stop the Israeli aggression.... Israel must be held accountable for the crimes it has committed.... Israeli officials must be brought before an international court and tried for the crimes they have committed against Palestinians...."

"The Syrian Vision"

Omar Jaftli, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented (7/11): "The meeting of Iraq's neighboring countries asserted once again that all neighboring countries are keen to preserve Iraq's territorial integrity and security and the success of the political process, which led to the formation of a national assembly and a new government and the announcement of a national reconciliation plan. What has been achieved is identical to the Syrian vision presented by Walid al-Mouallem on how to help Iraq achieve security and stability and support the elected government's efforts in this regard.... Al-Mouallem asserted Syria's readiness to cooperate fully with the Iraqi government in all fields, including the security field...."

"It is obvious to everyone that Iraq is at a crucial stage, especially since the US occupation's policy has failed in all respects in Iraq.... Therefore all parties in Iraq should recognize their mistakes in order not to lead the country to an unknown future, and in order to make the national reconciliation plan a success, to enhance relations with the neighboring countries, which understand Iraq's suffering, and to let the

elected government run the country's affairs...."

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